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DRAFT REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME MATTERS ON ITS IN-SESSIONAL MEETING HELD DURING THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL, 1-18 JUNE 1993

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CHAPTER III. COUNTRY, INTERCOUNTRY AND GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

Latin America (continued)

1. Country programme approvals

El Salvador

1. The Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) presented the fifth country programme for El Salvador (DP/CP/ELS/5) with a net indicative planning figure (IPF) of $6.7 million. He reminded the Committee that the Secretary-General had cited El Salvador as an excellent example of implementation of his Agenda for Peace, with assistance from the United Nations system, including UNDP. Some of the activities in 1992 included promotion of dialogue between the Government and the civil society; resource mobilization in support of the plan for reconstruction; creation of a trust fund in support of the reintegration of ex-combatants into civil life; support to the new National Police Academy; and promotion of transparency in the electoral process. The programme for 1993-1996 focused on four areas: (a) national reconstruction and strengthening of democratic institutions; (b) poverty and employment; (c) modernization of the State; and (d) environment and sustainable development. He noted that resources mobilized to carry out the work were estimated to be five times the IPF.

2. The representative of El Salvador described the historical links between his Government and the United Nations and between peace and development. He stressed the importance of continuing support from the international community to ensure the success of the peace process.

3. Several delegations highlighted the important multiplier effect of the IPF in El Salvador. It was an example of how UNDP resources could be used as seed money and was a demonstration of the support for UNDP activities on the part of the Government and other donors. One delegation emphasized the role of UNDP in the implementation of the peace agreements, noting that there was need for a clearer mandate for UNDP in the new area of activity to enable it to respond quickly to the demand for its services. Many delegations expressed support for the country programme and its areas of concentration. One considered it to be one of the best structured programmes submitted. Two delegations expressed concern for its broad scope, particularly in relation to management development. One delegation wondered whether the country programme was too ambitious considering the present situation. The role of UNDP in coordination was commended and it was suggested that in the area of environment and development, there be more collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and with the communities involved.

4. The Committee recommended that the Council approve the fifth country programme for El Salvador.

Saint Helena

5. The Assistant Administrator and Director, RBLAC, presented the second country programme for Saint Helena (DP/CP/STH/2) with a net IPF of $2 million. He drew attention to the physical location and limited resource base of the country as factors that contributed to the difficulty in achieving sustainable development. The main development objectives of the island were a better use of limited national resources, reduced dependence on external aid and the creation of suitable employment opportunities. UNDP cooperation would complement that of the major donor country and was targeted at three areas of concentration: (a) the universal pension scheme; (b) tourism development; and (c) the livestock development programme.

6. The representative of one delegation stated that his Government strongly supported the programme, noting that the island was located in the South Atlantic, with a population of about 5,000 people. It relied on shipping and there was no air service to the island. The island itself was not economically viable and relied to a great extent on external aid. He endorsed the focus on the development of tourism, which would provide some external earnings, and on livestock development, which would contribute to self-sufficiency. Another delegation questioned the appropriateness of placing Saint Helena under the responsibility of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, since the island is nearer to the coast of Africa. He suggested that the Committee propose to the Council the possibility of giving the responsibility for Saint Helena to another regional bureau.

7. The Assistant Administrator mentioned that the reason for placing Saint Helena under the responsibility of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean was based on the practical consideration of transportation links. Although only 1,900 miles from Angola, there was no transportation link with that country, while there was a link between Saint Helena and the Caribbean. In response to the question raised by one delegation, he indicated

that UNDP would look further into the possibility of placing Saint Helena under the responsibility of another bureau.

8. The Committee recommended that the Council approve the second country programme for Saint Helena.

CHAPTER V. FIELD VISITS

9. Reports were presented by the delegations of Lesotho and Pakistan on two field visits, each lasting two weeks and undertaken in April and May 1993. Participants from 11 Member States of the Governing Council visited Benin and Burkina Faso, and 10 participants visited El Salvador and Jamaica. Each team was accompanied by a senior official from UNDP headquarters.

10. The reports of the teams on their observations covered a number of topics: the programme approach; the comparative advantages of UNDP; national capacity-building and national execution; decentralization; coordination; agency support costs; headquarters/field communications; Office of Project Services; private sector in development; women in development; technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), environment and development; HIV/AIDS; United Nations Volunteers; administrative issues such as common premises; and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)-specific issues.

11. Participants commented favourably on the manner in which the visits, including project visits, had been organized. The teams were briefed by UNDP/UNFPA staff at headquarters and subsequently by the offices of UNDP Resident Representatives and UNFPA Country Directors in the field. The terms of reference developed by the Standing Committee at its meeting in February 1992 had provided helpful guidance for the preparation of the visits in the field. However, in the light of experience, certain aspects of the terms of reference needed refinement so that future field visits could be more sharply focused on a manageable number of issues, particularly for visits of five working days per country.

12. While acknowledging that in-depth familiarization with the operations of UNDP/UNFPA field offices had not been possible in the short time available, the participants shared the view that the programme of discussions and project visits enabled them to acquire a better grasp of UNDP and UNFPA support to development efforts in countries visited. It was also considered that the informal discussions of the Committee on the reports had been useful.

13. Delegations proposed that the terms of reference for future field visits should continue to emphasize that the visits were intended to be of an informative nature; also that sensitive areas such as national security or other political issues would remain outside the scope of the terms of reference. The possibility of preparing reports on the field visits during the visits was discussed.

14. The Committee also reviewed the report of the Bureau of the Council containing a synthesis of the findings and recommendations of the field visits to 12 countries in 1992 (DP/1993/66) as requested at its meeting in February 1993. The document was found to be comprehensive and informative.

Several delegations stated that the synthesis of the findings and recommendations on various programming and administrative issues in the field provided a useful reference for the Committee for consideration of the specific issues under its broader programme of work.

15. Delegations considered that to maximize the benefits of the visits for the work of the Governing Council, participants in future field visits should be government delegates who participated in the work of the Council. The widest possible geographical representation and appropriate gender balance should be maintained in the composition of the teams.

16. It was also suggested that the presence of the Resident Representative or his senior staff in all meetings and project visits, while useful, was not expected. Moreover, issues selected for examination should primarily be priority issues specific to the countries visited.

17. The Secretary of the Governing Council outlined plans for future field visits in 1993 and 1994. Visits to Albania and Uzbekistan were planned for August 1993. In April/May 1994, two countries in the African region would be visited. In January 1994, two countries in the Asia and Pacific region would be visited. In addition, visits were planned to two countries in the Arab region. Subject to budgetary resources, a field visit to two countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region would be planned for April/May 1994. Consultations would be undertaken with Governments in order to identify the countries for field visits being planned for 1994.

18. The terms of reference for the field visits were revised by an informal working group of the Committee and approved by the Committee. The revised terms of reference are contained in the annex to the present report.